As it happened: Pair guilty of felling world-famous Sycamore Gap tree in 'mindless act of destruction'

9 May 2025

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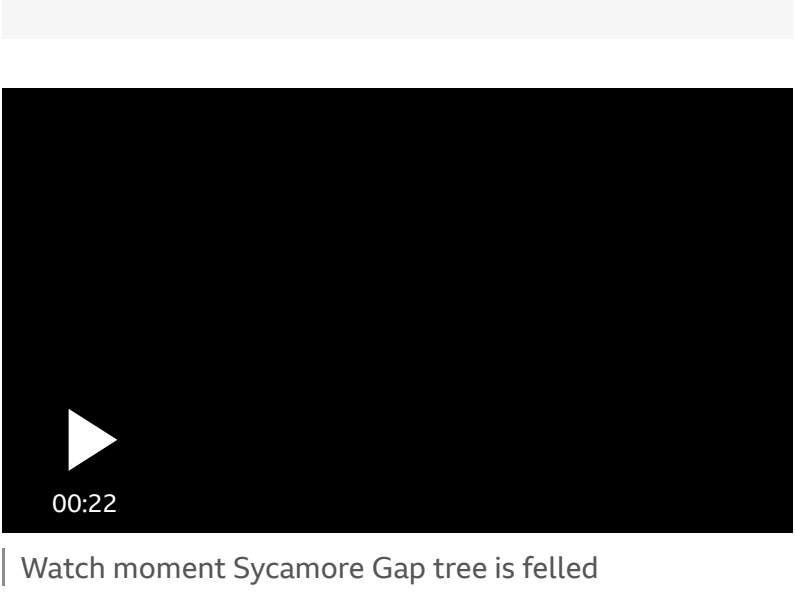
Summary

- **Two men are found guilty** of illegally cutting down the **world famous Sycamore Gap tree**
- **Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32**, both from Cumbria, are each convicted of two counts of criminal damage
- Northumbria Police say **the pair never gave an explanation** for felling the tree, but prosecutors say they were "revelling in the public outcry" as news of their crimes spread
- "In just under three minutes, Graham and Carruthers ended [the tree's] historic legacy in a **deliberate and mindless act of destruction**," the CPS says
- *What sentence might the men receive on 15 July? **We run through the possibilities***



Watch moment Sycamore Gap tree is felled

Live Reporting

Reporting by Duncan Leatherdale. Edited by Rachel Kerr

22:11 9 May

Sentencing on 15 July

We are bringing our live coverage of the Sycamore Gap trial to an end.

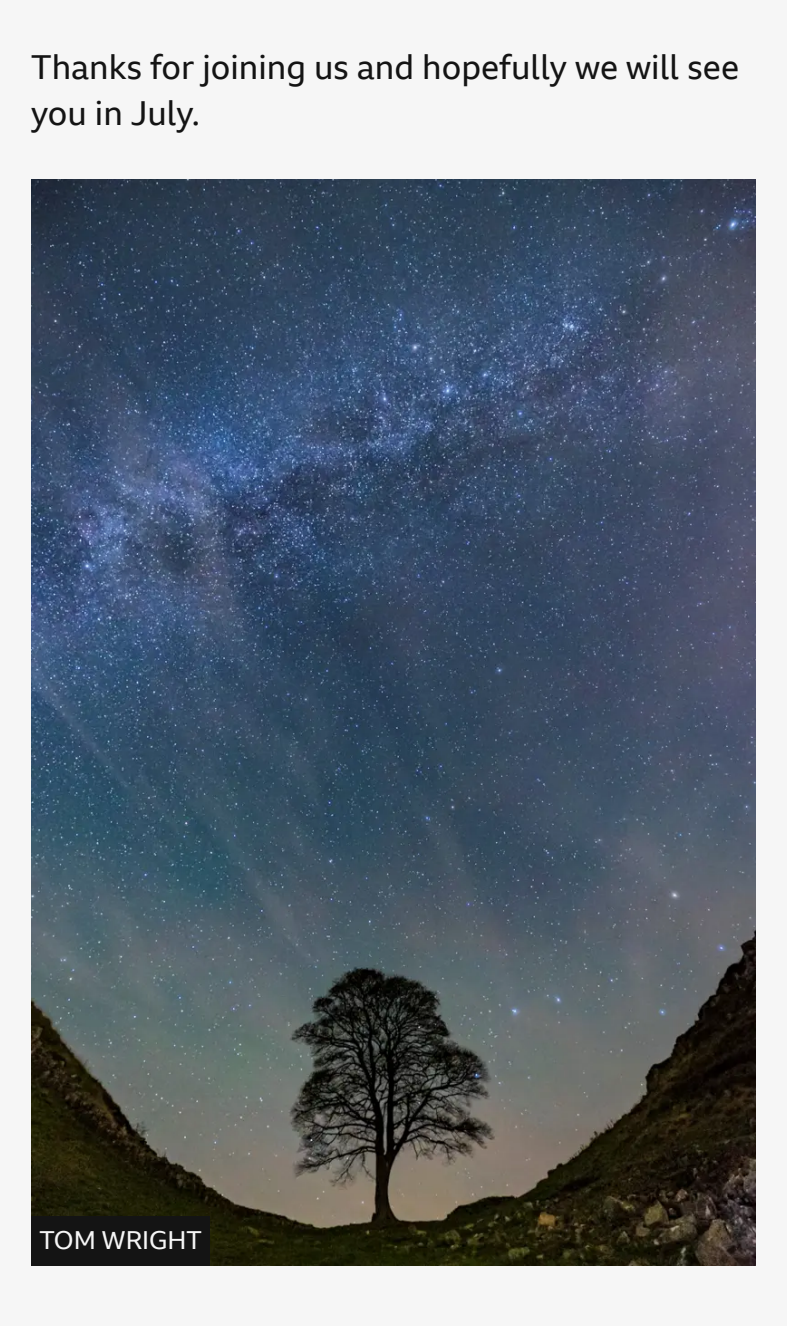
Just to recap, Daniel Graham, 39 and Adam Carruthers, 32, both from Cumbria, **have each been found guilty of two counts of criminal damage**.

Jurors took five hours to reach unanimous verdicts, their decision announced on the ninth day of the trial being held in courtroom one at Newcastle Crown Court.

Both men have been remanded into custody, in part for their "own protection", ahead of sentencing, which is due to take place on 15 July.

Mrs Justice Lambert said they should be prepared for "lengthy" custodial sentences.

Thanks for joining us and hopefully we will see you in July.



TOM WRIGHT

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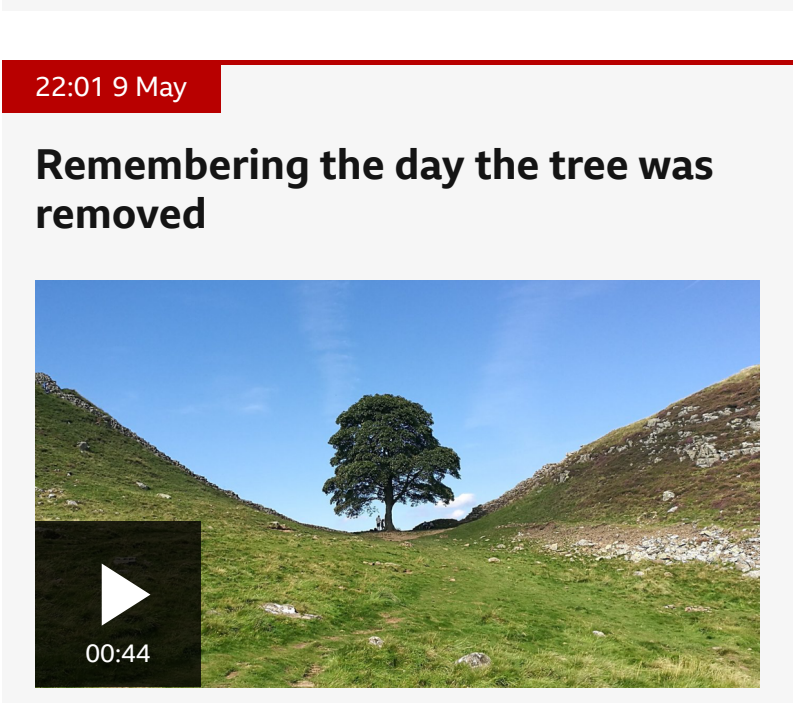
22:01 9 May

Remembering the day the tree was removed



Sycamore Gap tree cut up and removed from Hadrian's Wall site

When it was cut down, the tree fell northwards on to the wall directed by the way it had been cut and the strong winds being wrought by Storm Agnes.

The tree's copious canopy bore the brunt of much the impact, hitting the ground beyond the wall, but the lower part of the trunk came to rest on the historic stones of the Roman-built barrier.

Two weeks later, a meticulous operation was carried out to remove the tree under the watchful eyes of members of the public and the media.

You can **watch our report from the time above and read more about it here**, the day the site's usual sounds of circling crows and blustering winds were replaced by the snarl of chainsaws and thunder of diesel engines.

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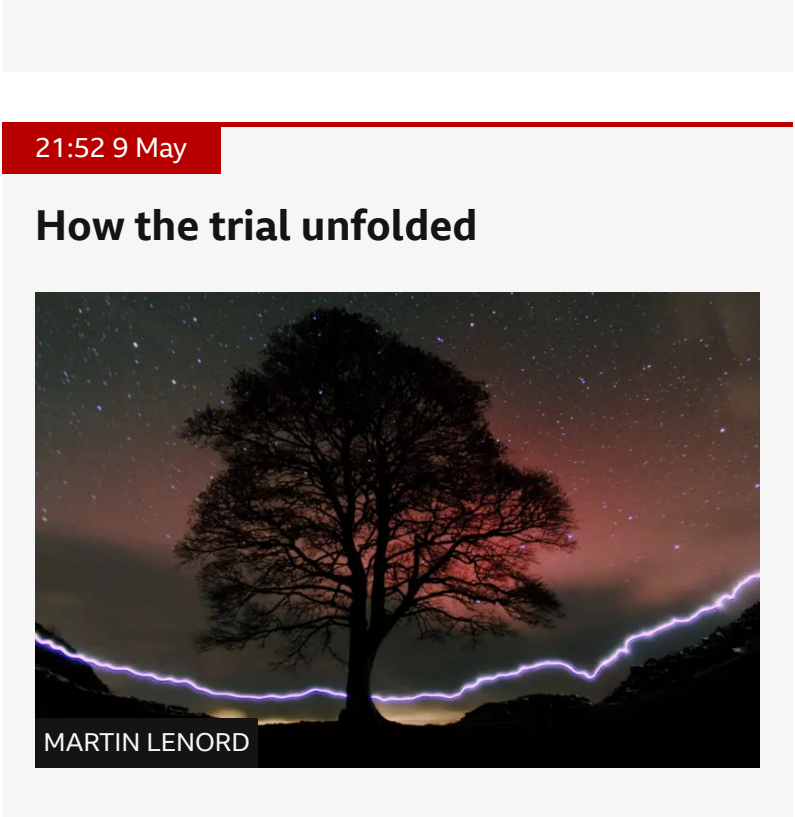
21:52 9 May

How the trial unfolded



MARTIN LENORD

The trial began a week last Monday, with the jury being sworn in and judge Mrs Justice Lambert **warning them to set all emotion aside when reaching a verdict**.

On Tuesday, **prosecutor Sir Richard Wright KC opened the case to jurors**, describing it as a "moronic mission" and how the pair had taken a wedge away as a "trophy".

On Wednesday, the **video which prosecutors say shows the moment the tree was felled**, which had been filmed on Daniel Graham's phone, was shown to jurors.

The two **defendants' police interviews were read to the court** on Thursday, in which Mr Graham claimed he had been framed as part of a feud and Adam Carruthers said he had no training in using chainsaws.

Mr Graham took to the witness box on Friday, **telling jurors his "best pal" Mr Carruthers had been fascinated with the tree and admitted felling it**. The court also heard **he had made an anonymous call to police to point the finger** at his co-accused.

The trial broke for three days over the bank holiday weekend, and, when it resumed this Tuesday, it was Mr Carruthers' turn to give evidence. He **told jurors he had "no clue" who felled the sycamore and expressed surprise** at the public outrage as he thought it was "just a tree".

On Wednesday, the **closing speeches were made** with the prosecution saying the pair thought felling the tree would be "just a bit of a laugh" but then were too scared to admit it and be public enemy number one. The defence barristers reiterated the defendants' claims of innocence.

Jurors retired to start considering their verdicts at 11:51 yesterday, taking the rest of the day and about half an hour or so this morning (about five hours in total) before being ready to reveal their decision.

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21:40 9 May

How people reacted to the felling at the time

Chris Robinson

BBC News North East & Cumbria

MARK BEADLE

Standing tall for over a century, a lone tree at Northumberland's Sycamore Gap had survived even the harshest of elements that often battered its remote setting.

For many, it was more than a tree. It was a symbol of Northumberland and the surrounding North East.

You can **read more reaction from people at the time**.

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21:35 9 May

People share anger on social media

Ever since the world awoke to find the tree had been felled, there has been a torrent of anger and sadness shared across social media.

Prosecutors said Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers had revelled in it, exchanging dozens of screenshots of social media posts and press reports in the aftermath.

That outpouring of emotion has continued today with the convictions of the men.

One woman described the pair as "mindless thugs", while another wrote that their actions were "horrible" and had "distressed millions of people".

The duo were described by one user as "cultural vandals", while another contributor said he felt "sad" that people would "resort to destruction for giggles".

Upon seeing footage of the tree being felled, which had been filmed on Graham's phone, one woman said she felt like she had "just watched a murder".

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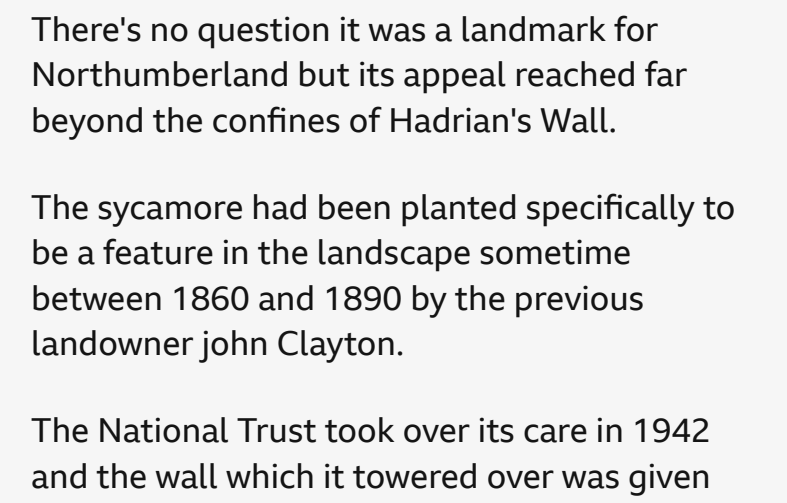
21:26 9 May

Another chapter written in the tree's history



NATIONAL TRUST

Another chapter in the tree's history has been written today.

There's no question it was a landmark for Northumberland but its appeal reached far beyond the confines of Hadrian's Wall site.

The sycamore had been planted specifically to be a feature in the landscape sometime between 1860 and 1890 by the previous landowner John Clayton.

The National Trust took over its care in 1942 and the wall which it towered over was given Unesco World Heritage Site status in 1987.

It found global fame when it was used as a filming location in the 1991 movie Robin Hood Prince of Thieves, with Kevin Costner in the eponymous role rescuing the young boy Wulf (played by Dan Newman), who had fled the baying hounds of the villainous Guys Gisborne (Michael Wincott), from in its branches.

Costner also memorably plucked a sprig of mistletoe from the tree while talking to his companion Azeem, played by Morgan Freeman.

The tree was named England's Tree of the Year in 2016 and was a popular spot with both locals and visitors.

On 27 September 2023 it was deliberately felled sparking international fury and consternation.

Now those behind what prosecutors called the "mindless thuggery" have been convicted, another chapter ends.

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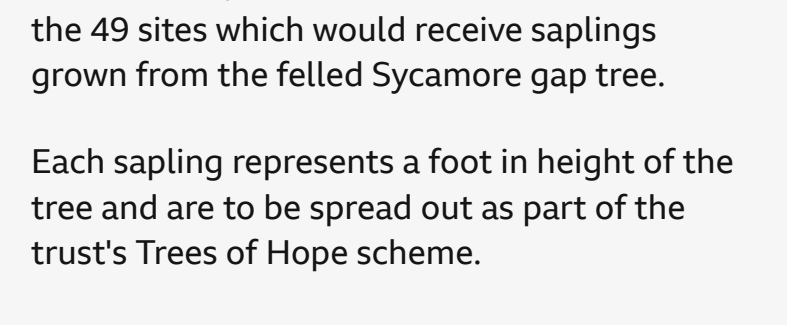
21:14 9 May

Sycamore Gap saplings being spread around the country



NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES/JAMES DOBSON

In November, the National Trust announced the 49 sites which would receive saplings grown from the felled Sycamore gap tree.

Each sapling represents a foot in height of the tree and are to be spread out as part of the trust's Trees of Hope scheme.

They are being cared for by the National Trust's Plant Conservation Centre and will be ready to plant out next winter.

You can **read more about it here**.

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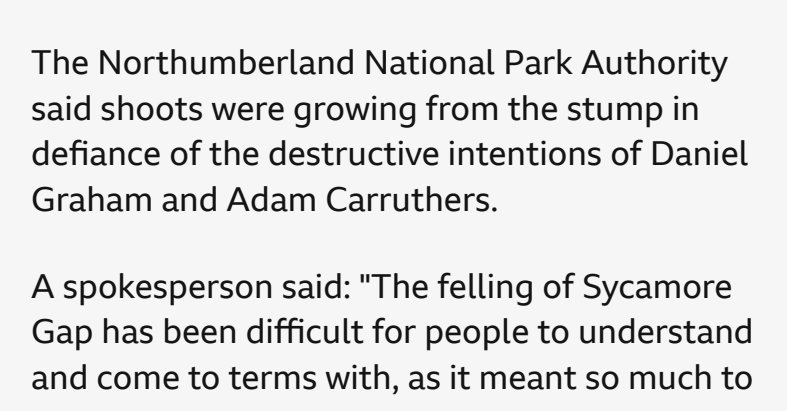
20:58 9 May

Shoots growing 'defiantly' from stump



PA MEDIA/NATIONAL TRUST

The Northumberland National Park Authority said shoots were growing from the stump in defiance of the destructive intentions of Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers.

A spokesperson said: "The felling of Sycamore Gap has been difficult for people to understand and come to terms with, as it meant so much to so many.

"Our focus remains on ensuring positive outcomes from this tragic act and Northumberland National Park Authority will continue to work with partners to ensure the Sycamore Gap legacy is fitting for people, place and nature.

"There are shoots from the stump growing defiantly, saplings from the seeds have become Trees of Hope in communities across the UK and the largest section of the tree will have a new home at The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre as a beautiful installation.

"Those who had a connection to the tree can continue to do so."

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20:48 9 May

How a park ranger alerted world to Sycamore Gap tree's fate

Martin Lindsay

BBC North East & Cumbria investigations

The deliberate felling of the tree on Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland angered people around the world. For the man who was first on the scene, it was a moment that changed his life forever.

Park ranger Gary Pickles was in shock.

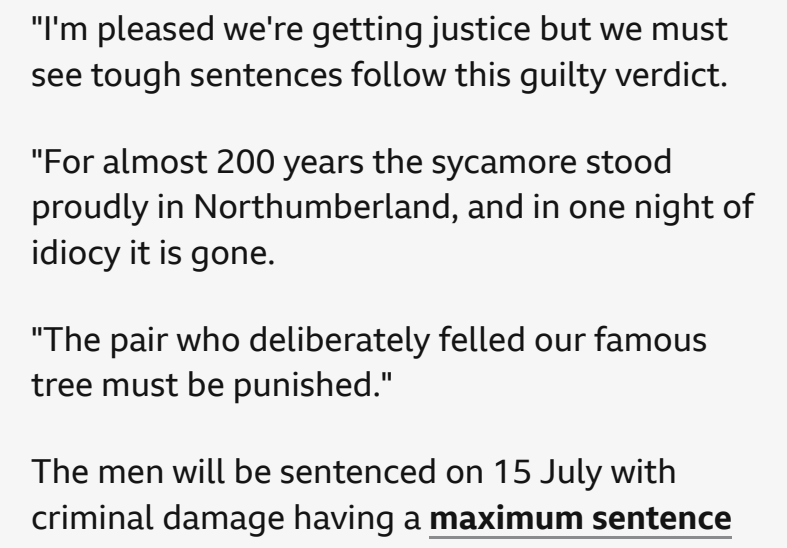
Where once had stood arguably England's favourite tree, there was now just air.

When the call had come through earlier that morning, Gary had thought it was a prank.

His working day on 28 September 2023 had barely started when a farmer called his office to report the tree was down.

"I doubted a farmer would be telling us a silly story so I thought 'oh my god, I think this might be true'."

You can read the full story here and **listen on BBC Sounds here**.



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20:34 9 May

Mayor calls for 'tough sentences'

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers should face "tough sentences" after they were convicted of illegally felling the much-loved and "iconic" Sycamore Gap tree.

She said: "Nothing will replace our iconic Sycamore Gap tree, it was a North East landmark and I know so many people, like me, are still devastated by its loss.

"I'm pleased we're getting justice but we must see tough sentences follow this guilty verdict.

"For almost 200 years the sycamore stood proudly in Northumberland, and in one night of idiocy it is gone.

"The pair who deliberately felled our famous tree must be punished."

The men will be sentenced on 15 July with criminal damage having a **maximum sentence of 10 years in prison**.

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20:26 9 May

National Trust wants to create 'positive legacy' of tree

The National Trust, which has owned the tree since the 1940s, said the "needless" felling of the tree had "shocked people around the country and overseas" which demonstrated the "powerful connection between people and our natural heritage"

"It was felt particularly deeply here in the north-east of England where the tree was an emblem of the region and the backdrop to many personal memories and stories," a spokesperson said.

They added: "We're now focussed on creating a positive legacy for the tree, working in partnership with others.

"This includes planting the 49 Trees of Hope grown from the original sycamore in communities across the UK later this year."

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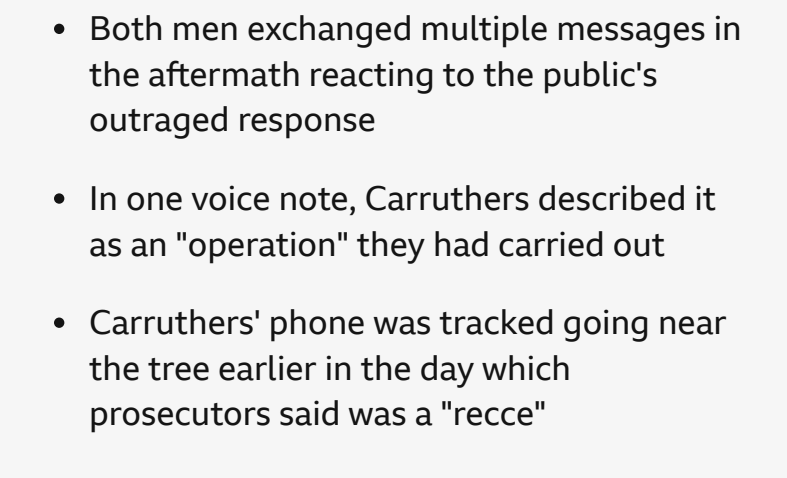
20:11 9 May

A quick reminder of the evidence



CPS

You can scroll back through this page to find plenty of detail about all the evidence in the Sycamore Gap trial, but here is a brief summary of what the jurors heard.

- The much-loved tree was chopped down with a chainsaw overnight on 27 September 2023
- Daniel Graham's car and phone were tracked going to and from the site that night
- A video of the felling was recorded on Graham's phone and sent to Carruthers
- A picture of a wedge of wood taken from the tree as a "trophy" was photographed on Graham's phone in the back of his Range Rover (pictured above)
- Both men exchanged messages in the aftermath reacting to the public's outraged response
- In one voice note, Carruthers described it as an "operation" they had carried out
- Carruthers' phone was tracked going near the tree earlier in the day which prosecutors said was a "recce"
- The men were best friends, did everything together and were both experienced at felling trees with chainsaws

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19:52 9 May

Pair showed 'no remorse'

The two men found guilty of felling the tree had showed "no remorse", Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner Susan Dungworth said.

She said the felling had been "unfathomable" and "generated outrage and upset among many people who had taken Northumberland's iconic tree to heart".

She praised police for their investigation which had led to the conviction of Daniel Graham and Adam Carruthers for the "deliberate act of vandalism".

"There was no remorse, but there was compelling evidence, and now there will be justice," Ms Dungworth said.

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19:43 9 May

Trial sparked huge media attention

Erica Witherington

Reporting from Newcastle Crown Court

"It was just a tree."

That's what Adam Carruthers shrugged on the witness stand.

He said he just couldn't understand why news of the felling had generated such worldwide attention, "almost as if someone had been murdered".

In some ways he had a point - the turnout here at Newcastle Crown Court has been on a par with some of the high profile murder trials I've covered.

But for many, this has felt like murder.